

December 31, 2003

LEESBURG POLICE ASSIST WITH AFTER HOURS CARE PROGRAM

Since October 1, 2002 the Leesburg Police Department has partnered with Christian Social Services and local hotels to offer emergency lodging assistance. According to Taren Schwarz, Executive Director of Christian Social Services of Lake and Sumter Counties "when someone is in need of a place to stay due to an emergency situation they will most likely contact a church or the police."

One night motel stay for after hours emergency care assistance vouchers are issued by police officers after evaluating and determining if a person is a candidate for this service. The situation of emergency need could range from a family traveling through town at night and their car breaks down to a victim needing a safe place. A police officer must accompany the emergency victim to the motel.

Only five vouchers per month are provided to the police department and if they are not used, they do not carry over to the next month. Fortunately, the average voucher usage is from one to three per month. Client tracking through social security number keeps down fraudulent abuse of the system. Also, if other human services are needed, the victims are encouraged to contact Christian Social Services the next day.



Lt. Ginny Padgett and Taren Schwarz

Schwarz is thankful to the Leesburg Police Department's stewardship in governing the After Hours Care Program. She is especially grateful to Chief Chuck Idell, Lt. Ginny Padgett and Lt. Bill Chrisman, for their leadership support in program training and implementation.

"The police are there to help you, not to get you" Schwarz said. The After Hours Care Program in Leesburg has been so successful that Schwarz plans to take the program county-wide by spring of 2004.

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